

20 February 2024



John Luke
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REF: DOIA-2324-0528

Tēnā koe John

Your Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 24 January 2024 to the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (the Ministry) requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982:

...copies of the following policies: Social Media Policy, Allowances Policy, Travel Policy, and the Gifts and Hospitality Policy...

As noted in our partial transfer letter to you on 1 February 2024, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) will be responding to the parts of your request for the following policies: *Allowances Policy, Travel Policy, and the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.*

In response to your request, the Ministry's *Social Media Policy* is being released to you in full and is included within this document.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of our response to your request. Information about how to contact the Ombudsman's office is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone: 0800 802 602.

Please note, due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry may publish responses to requests for official information on our website, shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team: ministerial@ethniccommunities.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edward Firth", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Edward Firth
Director of Ministerial Services

Social Media Policy



Ministry for
Ethnic
Communities
Te Tari Mātāwaka

Last updated: 02 February 2022

Cohesion link: <https://dia.cohesion.net.nz/Sites/CMT/ETC/ layouts/15/DocIdRedir.aspx?ID=6EYAVYC5ZNWP-100-6106>

Context

With the proliferation of social media, the lines between private, personal life and public, professional life have become increasingly blurred. Ministry for Ethnic Communities (MEC) staff must take care when using social media as their online presence can be linked to MEC, even if they don't intend it to be. MEC's social media presence must also be appropriately managed in line with best practice and to enhance our reputation.

As public servants, staff must always:

- Use MEC's resources carefully and only for intended purposes – this includes computers, phones, internet access and their time at work.
- Treat information with care and use it only for proper purposes.
- Remain politically and commercially neutral in their work.
- Work to improve the performance and efficiency of MEC.
- Avoid any activities, work or non-work, that may harm the Ministry's reputation.
- Act lawfully and objectively.
- Be honest.

External references:

[Guidance for State services official use of social media](#)

[digital.govt.nz's online engagement advice](#)

[Guidelines for Government Advertising](#)

[General Election Guidance](#)

[Privacy Act 2020](#)

Purpose

This policy sets out expectations to MEC staff members about how they will conduct themselves in their personal social media use and covers how MEC's own social media presence is to be managed.

Scope

The policy applies to MEC staff but may be relevant to contractors who are working on aspects of MEC work that are in the public domain.

The policy

Social media – personal use

While MEC staff have the same rights of free speech and independence in the conduct of their private affairs as other members of the public, MEC has the following expectations of staff when using social media in a personal capacity.

- You have a duty of care not to publicly criticise policies or work you have been professionally involved or associated with.
- Avoid associating yourself with MEC or the work of MEC if you are using a social media site that includes language or images that may be considered offensive or may damage your reputation personally and/or professionally.
- Be aware that if you mention MEC, then your comments are no longer personal. If you have identified yourself as a MEC employee in your profile, state that your views are your own.
- If you use any information on social media sites gained in the course of your official duties, ensure that it has already been published and is publicly available.
- Do not make a personal attack on a Minister or colleague, or an employee in another public sector agency.
- As a general rule, the more senior your position is, the more discreet you should be about contributing to public debate on social media.
- Should you accidentally put MEC's reputation at risk, or fall prey to a malicious attack, you should inform your manager.

Sharing of MEC posts

MEC staff are welcome and encouraged to follow, like and share MEC social media posts.

Social media - professional use

Spokespeople must:

- Liaise with the Communications team before responding to any media enquiries.
- Work with the Communications team to respond openly, honestly and promptly to media enquiries.
- Keep their manager aware of the media issues they are working on.
- Seek advice from Legal Services when in doubt about legal issues and Finance where there may be financial implications.
- Alert the Communications team if they have any – even informal – interaction with a member of the media on the same or related subject to a media response they have been involved with.

Posting

- Only an authorised media spokesperson should post on publicly available social media sites on behalf of MEC for work reasons. This includes commenting on someone else's site as well as on a MEC-initiated site.
- The post must be peer reviewed by another appropriate staff member to ensure that it's appropriate to post and to check the content's facts, tone, spelling and grammar.

- Posts should present MEC as a professional and collaborative organisation.
- Posts must not breach privacy, copyright or any other laws.
- A 'no surprises' approach should be taken, in line with our media policy.

'Likes', 'reactions', 'follows' and sharing

Likes, reactions, follows and sharing of other's social media sites and posts from a MEC profile should be made with care and remain politically and commercially neutral.

Request for information

Any request for information made to MEC via our social media presence should be responded to promptly and in accordance with the Official Information Act.

Setting up a social media presence/channel

Any new MEC social media presence requires the express permission of the Manager Communications, the relevant business unit DCE and the Chief Executive.

The presence should have terms of use, including hours of monitoring. It must clearly state that it is supported by MEC and should link to ethniccommunities.govt.nz and any other relevant MEC communication channels.

Ongoing management of a social media presence/channel

The presence must be managed in collaboration with the Communications team or media spokespeople.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982